Homestead National Monument of America

Lawrence Welk Musician, Entertainer, Son of Homesteaders 1903-1992 Strasburg, North Dakota

Lawrence Welk was the sixth of nine children born to Ludwig and Christina Welk, immigrants from the Odessa region of Russia. Like many children of homesteaders, he was born in a sod house on the family's 160-acre claim.

Lawrence Welk developed a love of music at a young age, often spending time alone playing his brothers accordion when not doing chores on his parents' farm. When he was 17, he borrowed \$400 from his father to purchase his own accordion, agreeing to stay and work on the family farm for the next four years as repayment of the loan. After those four years had past, he left home for good on his 21st birthday, March 11, 1924, to make it big as a musician.

For the next 30 years, Welk made his living playing weddings, local festivals and theatres. He drifted in and out of several different bands and made his way to various towns throughout North and South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Texas, Colorado, and Nebraska. He also married in 1931

His big break came when he moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1938. It was there that his style of music came to be known as "champagne music." Welk was very successful over the next decade, and his band made its local television debut in Los Angeles on May 2, 1951. On July 2, 1955, The Lawrence Welk Show debuted on the ABC television network, where it ran until 1971. After 1971, it became a syndicated production, running into the early 1980s. The show is still popular in reruns on many local and syndicated stations throughout the country.

Lawrence Welk was one of the most popular bandleaders in American history, and he is still considered the "favorite son" of the state of North Dakota. He lived until 1992.